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Office of the PCCF-cum-Secretary
Department of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management
Forest Secretariat, Deorali, Gangtok –737102, Sikkim

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NOTIFICATION

Narsing Conservation Zonation

WHEREAS, protected areas should be zoned according to values in smaller pockets not necessarily as large cores, but a mosaic of smaller, manageable cores, spread in an area with tempered human use. Other areas for incentive programmes such as community based tourism need to be established. The smaller cores should act as 'source' populations for sustaining populations of endangered species outside.

AND WHEREAS, conservation of the Himalayan Tahr (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*) and endangered medicinal plants of the high altitude alpine ecosystem, and their habitat alongwith other flora, fauna and alpine ecosystems in West Sikkim is of utmost importance.

NOW THEREFORE, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (8) of section 35 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (53 of 1972) the State Government hereby notifies the following areas within the Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) for conservation zonation of flagship species:

Flagship species	**Conservation Zonation**
Himalayan Tahr (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*)	Kayung in Upper Pokhri-Narkhola, West Sikkim by declaration of 29 square kilometer of the Khangchendzonga National Park (1.63% of the total area of KNP) as the Kayung Himalayan Tahr Conservation Zone (KHTCZ)
Medicinal Plants wild germplasm	Relli in Upper Pokhri-Narkhola, West Sikkim by the declaration of 7.5 square kilometer of the Khangchendzonga National Park (0.42% of the total area of KNP) as the Relli Medicinal Plants Conservation Zone (TMPCZ). It envisages the creation of *insitu* field gene banks of inter and intra specific diversity of medicinal plants across the alpine zone of the Eastern Himalayas.

1. Conservation Importance and Values

The steep rocky ridge running east west and separating the watersheds of North Sikkim (Dzongu) and West Sikkim (Tashiding) has been traditionally free from yak grazing. The upper reaches have extensive pristine alpine sedge meadows which offer prime habitat for endangered mountain ungulates, alpine birds and medicinal

plants. Highly nutrient *sun buki (Kobresia capillifolia)* forms extensive meadows. The presence of a number of *urars* (caverns) provides cover from inclement weather for wild ungulates. Inaccessibility due to tough terrain has made most of this area almost free from biotic interference.

This area has a population of Himalayan Tahr and is also important from the point of view of studying the impacts of pastoralism, since it has a very limited grazing history by domestic livestock. Valuable medicinal plants like Kurki *(Picrorhiza kurrooa)*, Bikh *(Aconitum ferox)*, Sharmaguru (*Lomatogonium sp.*) and Khokim *(Rheum acuminatum)* are also abundantly available.

2. Baseline Habitat Survey during summer of 2005 and 2006

The local community of Pokhri, Narkhola, Karjee, Mangnam and Labdang jointly with The Mountain Institute, Forest Department and the local NGOs conducted a habitat survey during 2005 and 2006. During this survey the nature trail, camping sites and wildlife critical habitats were identified.

Vegetation sampling was conducted during based on (1 X 1 meter quadrate) sample plots with the sampling stations at Kayung, Tholpe and Kishong. This alpine landscape in the conservation zone can be categorized as follows:

S. No.	Landscape Property	Value
1	Habitat Type	Tussock forming Sedge Meadow
2	Aspect	South west
2	Biotic Pressure	Very limited history of grazing or collection of medicinal plants traditionally. Status is pristine.
3	% vegetation cover	95 %
4	% cover of palatable plants	80% (dominated by *Sun buki (Kobresia capillifolia)*)
5	Species richness (no of species per sample plot of $1m^2$)	7
6	Valuable fodder plants	*Sun buki (Kobresia capillifolia), Bhalu buki (Kobresia duthiei), Rani buki (Festuca vallesiaca), Suire buki (Juncus sp.), Aconogonum molle (Thotne)* and *Kenjo (Rheum nobile)*
7	Evidence of key wildlife (direct and indirect evidence)	Himalayan Tahr, Snow Partridge, Himalayan Monal, Blood Pheasant and Flying Squirrel
8	Valuable medicinal plants	*Kurki (Picrorhiza kurrooa), Bikh (Aconitum ferox), Bhutkesh (Anemone polyanthes), Pakhanbhed (Bergenia purpurascens)* and *Khokim (Rheum acuminatum)*

These meadows should be given highest conservation importance and kept free from competition from domestic livestock. The group came across four Himalayan Tahrs at Upper Kayung chu and Yung kharka. We also sighted flying squirrel, snow partridge, blood pheasant, himalayan monal in the same area. After crossing Kenjo taar we came across a pocket of extensive Kurki *(Picrorhiza kurrooa)* meadows along Laduwa khola.

3. Existing legal status and threats

All the four Conservation Zones fall within the Khangchendzonga National Park which is notified under the Wildlife Protection Act -1972 and Himalayan Tahr, Himalayan Monal, Snow Partridge and Blood Pheasant are all protected under Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act-1972. At Laduwa khola we also came across a decayed makeshift *Bhatti* which the local resource persons inform was used by the yak herders to dry *Kurki* before transporting it to the adjoining villages.

4. Boundaries

The boundaries of the four conservation zones is as follows:

Kayung Himalayan Tahr Conservation Zone (KHTCZ): Declaring this area within the KNP, with the following borders:

West Follows the Rungdung ridge (Deorali pass)

East Follows the 4000m contour

South Follows the 4000m contour
North Follows the Kayung ridge
Total Area 29 square kilometers (1.63% of the total area of KNP)
This conservation area includes the areas around Chongri, Panch-pokhri, Yung kharka, Thulo Pathichaur, Sano Pathichaur, Lametaar, Azaguth, Upper Kayung chu, Nikashe, Deorali pass.

Relli Medicinal Plants Conservation Zone (TMPCZ): Declaring this area within the KNP, with the following borders:
West Relli river (mathlo taar)
East Follows the Rungdung ridge (Deorali pass)
South Follows the 4500m contour
North Ridge at the foot of Mt. Narsing
Total Area 7.5 square kilometers (0.42% of the total area of KNP)
This conservation area includes the areas around Deorali pass (Rungdung Himal), Kenjo taar, Laduwa khola, Lower Relli taar, Upper Relli taar.

5. Map of the conservation Area

6. Key Issues in the Conservation Management Plan

(A) Conservation Initiatives

(1) Publicity of these regulations by installing adequate signages at Rabong, Borong, Tashiding, Pokhri, Mangnam, camping sites and the conservation zone.

(2) Informing the travel agents, tour operators, herders, panchayats, pack animal operators, trekking service providers, Himal Rakshaks, JFMC/EDC and NGOs about these regulations.

(3) Capacity building of field staff of forest department, travel agents, herders, pack animal operators, Himal Rakshaks, Panchayats, JFMC/EDC and local NGOs.

(4) Annual census / survey of the population, distribution and status of himalayan tahr, medicinal plants and other indicator flora and fauna in this conservation zone shall be conducted.

(5) Encourage focused conservation and recovery programs for the musk deer.

(6) Regular patrolling jointly with the local community, JFMC/EDC and Himal Rakshaks especially during monsoons and winters should be conducted to ascertain instances of poaching and status of other threats and controlling them.

(7) Setting up of a wildlife intelligence network

(8) Involvement of reputed NGOs in wildlife research, conservation and monitoring

(9) These conservation initiatives should be incorporated into the existing schemes and programmes of the Khangchendzonga National Park and Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in order to provide adequate funds for implementation of this zonation and conservation management plan.

(A) Conservation Regulations

(1) Movement of pack animal (horses, dzos and yaks) is prohibited throughout the year.

(2) No camping by tourists within this conservation zone is permitted.

(3) Lighting fire or cooking food is permitted only at the designated campsites.

(A) Legal provisions and penalty

(1) Pack animal (horse, dzo and yak) operators or yak herders who enter into this conservation zone shall be punishable with a fine which shall not be less than five thousand rupees but may extend to ten thousand rupees apart from the compensation for the damage caused. Provided that in case of a subsequent offence the fine shall not be less than ten thousand rupees and may extend to twenty five thousand rupees apart from the compensation for the damage caused and the concerned pack animal operator or yak herder shall be banned from entering in the forest areas of the state for a period of five years.

(2) If tourists or support staff violate the conservation regulations then the concerned travel company organizing the trek or in its absence the group leader of the trekking party (hereinafter referred to as "trek manager") shall be punishable with a fine which shall not be less than five thousand rupees but may extend to ten thousand rupees apart from the compensation for the damage caused. Provided that in case of a subsequent offence the fine shall not be less than ten thousand rupees and may extend to twenty five thousand rupees apart from the compensation for the damage caused and the concerned "trek manager" shall be banned from trekking or organizing trekking in the forest areas of the state for a period of five years.

(3) The compounding officer shall include all forest officers not below the rank of a block officer. The compounding officer may order reward to be paid to a person who renders assistance in the detection of the offence or apprehending the offender out of the sum of money accepted as fine not exceeding twenty percent of such money. The compounding officer may meet up the expenditure incurred for detecting the offence and apprehending the offender out of the sum of money accepted as fine not exceeding twenty percent of such money.

7. These rules shall apply in addition to the laws relating to forests, environment, wildlife and biodiversity.

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